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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the author's long personal involvement in several interpersonal communication movements, this paper defines and defends sensitivity training and experiential learning. After examining some philosophical and ethical themes and theories of education, the paper recounts some difficulties of fitting alternative modes of education into the traditional academic environment. It then points out the common criticisms of the "group movement" and evaluates the accuracy and fairness of such critiques. The results of current research on the leader-trainer, groups and group participants, instrumented training, and the effects of experimental groups are then surveyed. The paper also describes the controversy over the role of self-disclosure, discusses the importance of the workshop, and reiterates the importance of a holistic approach to life. (JL)

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# SPEECH COMMUNICATION , SENSITIVITY TRAINING, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING,

Or

# " TOUCHY-FEELY" REVISITED. **

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By

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Hoyt Hudson, in his classic work on Educating Liberally said,

> "...the desideratum is to know what we feel--to determine the value of x. To recognize our emotional drives, to be aware of their force in directing and even in methodizing our thought, to make allowance for them but on no account to deny that they exist or to be deceived as to their force and direction..." /1

He also said that,"I prefer that the process of education shall be described as "understanding" one's environment and one's own self. " and " ...the starting point of our search ...must be the nature of the student as a human being with a desire to understand the world and himself." /2

Over two thousand years before Hudson spoke thus, our "patron saint", Aristotle wrote.

> "...men like those who are strongly attached to their friends and do not leave them in the lurch; for among good men they chiefly like those who are good friends. And those who do not fear to mention even their faults.( For...before friends we do not blush for faults merely condemned by public opinion...)...And men like those...in whom they have confidence;... Companionship, intimacy, kinship, and similar relations are species of friendship." /3

In George Isaac Brown's work on Confluent Education he refers to the "...integration or flowing together of the affective and cognitive elements in individual and group learning." /4 His thesis is that thinking is accompanied by

1/ Hudson, 1945. p. 63.
2/ Hudson, 1945. p. 79.
3/ Freese, Aristotle , 1926. p. 199.
4/ Brown, 1971, p. 3.

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feeling and visa versa and the denial of the existence of genuine feelings results in pseudo feelings, fear of change, and the substitution of fantasy and illusion for reality.

What we are about, here in our communication centered studies and teaching ,is a reinforcement of the themes just expressed through work called "Interpersonal Communication" and "Small Group Processes." The integration of cognitive and affective matters in our educational effort makes our task a difficult one in the face of the monolithic educational emphasis on cognitive knowledge as being the touchstone of freedom and growth and on affect as being a vestige of quasi religeous nature beyond the function of the school and university.

But, things are moving along. The struggle is alive and well, maturing in method, finding strength from criticism and research, and the confluency theme is becoming more and more a part of the educational mileu. Changes are being made in design, concepts, and method but the essential thrust is loyal to its origins in an image of people as "whole" feeling-thinking-acting beings capable of infinite growth and development.

Our interest in experiential education and the many avenues in its community is part of the evidence of the viability and energy of the wholistic theme. We are not reinventing the wheel, beating dead horses, or hiding in storm cellers but we are furthering the significant propositions of human behavior and development. Our concern comes at one of the most critical times in the scope of human history and survival.

SOME DEFINITIONS

We need to have some common understanding of the terms used in the title of this essay as well as their implication for the content.

## Experiential Learning

Morris Keeton and Pamela Tate, in the introduction to their series on Experiential learning say,

> "Experiential learning refers to learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with learning in which the learner only reads about, hears about, talks about, or writes abut these realities but never comes in contact with them as part of the learning process." /5

It is not a new system. Society has used the process outside the academy of learning from the beginning. Probably more is learned by students today from their out-of-class experiences than is learned within the cloisters of the academic. The significance now is that we are beginning to bring this time-proved learning system into the structured teaching-training context.

## Sensitivity Training

Sensitivity training is more difficult to identify. It has come to mean so many different things to different people. From the T-group concept developed by the National Training Laboratories beginning in 1947 to the encounter groups, marathon groups, awareness groups, sensing seminars, energy enhancement efforts, and a host of other named packages, the idea of involving people in attending to and exploring their own behavior, feelings, attitudes, etc. has persisted. A common content is found among the varieties in their multiplicity of packages. That content is the awareness of self, the awareness of the other,and the processes whereby these

5/ Keeton and Tate, 1978, p. 2

interact. The amount of emphasis varies infinitely with the variety of packages but the core theme is ubiquitous.

"Touchy-Feely"

Those programs packaged around highly physical awareness of self and other have come to be called "touchy-feelies" by some critics who seek to denigrate or depose the efforts. Unfortunately this moniker has been applied, also, to many other programs not so physically oriented.

And Those Others...

As with any program or development there are those who,sensing an opportunity for personal gain and profit, take the central theme and dress it up in strange and exotic raiment in order to attract attention and customers. ( Not inconsistent with our commercial world and the media-hype model that suffuses our public world.) And, as with most programs or ideas that attract many customers and attendees this exotica becomes the representative of the total concept and theme to many critics. Attacking the exotica, these critics fail to separate out the superficial from the substantive aspects of the themes.The audience of the critics then make the "guilt by association" jump to reject anything that carries any reference to the theme itself.

Some Philosophical and Ethical Themes and Theories

I have already identified the Aritotelian theme that becomes involved in this whole process as well as the liberal education themes of Hoyt Hudson and George Isaac

Brown. There are other themes that contribute to the rationale of the work. ( I'm not interested so much in the source of some of these themes at this moment as I am in the short identification of them. Their origins can be traced throughout the realm of human philosophy and ethics.)

Some Basic Assumptions Underlying the Theme.

--Science is a way of exploring reality...it is neither good or bad.

--Science and philosophy-ethics are not separate from one another. They make up the world of investigation and learning together. It is impossible to investigate any phenomenon scientifically without a logical ( philosophical) and ethical rationale surrounding the study.

--Change is ubiquitous but it is not progressive by nature. It can be regressive as easy as it can be growthful and developmental.

--The essentially human and personal parts of our life are not learned in the abstract. They can only be learned by clear and conscious confrontation by ourselves with the help of skilled guides.

--Each person has both good and bad, angelic and daimonic, forces and must learn to direct these in a way that does not destroy the valued elements of our living.

--The empiricism of science is not sufficient to provide us with all that is needed to survive in the modern world. In order to survive we need not only the empirical realities but we also need a goodly amount of what Thomas Mann called "Mythic Truth" or what I prefer to call "universal propositions" that have stood the

test of time and cultures.

-The human being is a whole being. What effects any part of us effects all of us. When a finger is damaged our mind responds, our relationships are effected and our whole system attempts to compensate for the condition and correct it. Understanding the whole human does not come from looking at the parts. It is the alchemy of the merging of the parts that creates a unique being greater than the sum of the parts and not predictable by study of the parts separate from each other.

--We are interdependent with each other. We cannot be alone in the community. We participate with each other in varying ways. The nature of that participation and the responsibility we take for it will determine what kind of a community we will have now and in the future.

-The most effective condition for learning and growth comes into reality within a person under external conditions that are supportive, challenging, filled with available information,and with some elements of risk present.

--Introspection and some self study by the person is a necessary condition for change and development so that our choices may be known and understood.

The Transformation

Marilyn Ferguson, in "The Acquarian Conspiracy" speaks of a future transformation of society resulting from changes within persons. /6 She calls attention to William James' proposition that only human beings can change their social patterns and that change comes from the inner attitudes and concepts as they

6/ Ferguson, Marilyn, 1980, p. 18.

are applied in the outer aspects of living. Throughout her book the theme of outer social change coming from inner personal changes is demonstrated. She speaks of the hunger of people for relationships with each other, to share opportunities, to acquire a sense of individual worth from the interaction with others.

Ferguson calls attention, as many writers have, to the cultural bias against introspection.

> "...Fear of criticism stops others. They might look foolish, pretentious, even crazy, to family, friends, co-workers. They worry that the journey inward will seem narcissistic or escapist. Indeed those who persist past the entry point have to overcome a pervasive culture bias against introspection. The search for self knowledge is often equated with self-importance, with a concern for one's own psyche at the expense of social responsibility. The populr criticism of psychotechnologies is typified by the term "the new narcissism. " /7

While we may enjoy belonging to intense cohesive groups we need to recognize that such experience, in and of itself, does not make it a useful teaching tool. The internal cohesion may be a unity of "blindness" that resists change and learning. Shared distortions and unproductive conforming behavior can rise in highly cohesive and "loving" groups of people. It takes some intervention of facilitative trainers, in such cases, to throw the unproductive balance out of equilibrium and into a searching condition where learning can take place. /8

This principle was demonstrated by J.D. Kaye who examined interaction process in T-groups and concluded that change was closely related to the content and the mode of interaction in the groups. Long term change requires a more confrontive mode of bahavior than short term change. /9

Learning from a group experience is more probable when group members function at high levels of empathy, respect, concreteness, and confrontation. /10 This concept

7/ Ferguson p. 90
8/ See Miller 1976 p. 221 ff.
9/ Kaye, J.D. 1973, p. 424 ff.
10/ Neville, B.W., 1978. p. 349 ff.

confirms long held communication-learning theory.

The use of small groups as a basis of learning and development of interpersonal communication is a common process. The use of groups, however, does not guarantee that learning is going to take place. We need to differentiate between practices effecting small groups. For example, the leader-facilitator's view of the nature of change and the function of the group plays a highly significant role in the learning processes that may arise in a group. /11

And then there are always the problems related to the ethics of the interaction and the training purpose. Paul Keller and Charles Brown addressed these problems and noted that,

> "(1) By virtue of the very nature of the communicative act, the two parties to a communication exercise control over each other. Both the listener and the speaker are, in part, at the other's mercy. (2) One of the highest values in a demoncratic culture is that conditions be created and maintained in which the potential of the individual is best realized. (3) The individual will be able to realize his potential to the extent that psychological freedom can be increased for him." /12

There could be many more but these will suffice to identify the base from which I approach this "Revisit."

## An Example of A Search

In 1946 I completed a study of how problems are formulated for discussion. My orientation at that time was formulary, defining, and prescriptive. I was seeking a "sure-fire" way to improve the process whereby people meet and deal with problems. Discussion was the context because it represented the idea of community, of people

11/ See Lennung, S.A. 1974, p. 37 ff.
12/ Keller and Brown, 1968 , p. 73

dealing with each other. It was the improvement of that community and its elevation to higher social and cultural achievement that was underneath the explicit goals of Ph.D. completion. But I was not satisfied. The obvious failure of the logical formula to transform the process in the living exchange of discussion in its broader forms haunted me. So I started a search.

In 1949 I went to the National Training Laboratory in Group Development in Bethel, Maine to seek an understanding of the Lewin theories in practice and to experience the process that was then stirring the educational world. I was intrigued and at the same time affronted. I found people talking and dealing with communication on a level that was not really underlined in my rhetorical studies but that I understood quite well. The experiences were not strange and novel...they were the kinds of thing that had been going on among my close friends and myself since early high school days when we would sit on my girl-friend's front porch and tell each other how we perceived each other and talked about ways we could change what we didn't like. At Bethel,however, the matter was structured as part of the culture of the T-group. The N.T.L. emphasis on process got inextricably involved with my sense of myself and my personhood and I could never really separate them. How can I look at the leadership of my group without seeing myself in some fashion responding to that leadership? And when I look at my own responses I'm immediately involved in their source, dimension, and strength. What that said to me was that I needed to take a closer look at myself within the context of the communities in which I circulated.

Carrying some of the luster of the "Group dynamics" along with me, I tried to apply it in the academic and real world away from the protected setting of Bethel. Ugh! I soon learned that out of context and in certain groups a non-directive leader can be a perfect flopo!

So the search continued, through some psychological analysis, through serving on the staff of the Southwestern Human Relations Training Laboratory with Bob Blake, Jane Mouton, Jack Gibb, Al. North, Ernestine Bowen,Musafer and Caroline Sherif and others. There, the interaction was more realistic and stressful and I became more aware of how my own personal self-issues effect my whole performance as a laboratory trainer. That needed some attention.

There followed a hiatus in my academic connections during which time I explored another but closely related profession of mediation of labor management disputes in the "real" world. I discovered that the academic was not well regarded by the rank and file of the business world but that a lot of the ideas and skills that we dealt with in the academic were highly useful in that "practical" world and that the opposite could also be true.

Upon returning to the academic ( I often wonder why )I began the search in earnest for alternatives to teaching-learning that would be more impactful and useful in facilitating the personal growth and development of those who come to us as students. I had, by now, recognized clearly that all the so-called " academic knowledge" in the world would not really fit me as a person to deal with other people around me and that many others were facing the same crisis.

So, in a spirit of inquiry I went to an encounter group! Wow! It really shook me up. A lot of it I didn't like....I felt on the spot....yet, the warmth and the caring and the sense of community, however short lived it was, refreshed me and stimulated me to look deeper. I began, again, to look more closely at myself in relation to the others in my life. And so, I tried an "advanced" program. Later I went to Esalen and the Institute for Human Studies at Berkeley several times to

explore different kinds of programs: small group process, gestalt, meditation, massage, body work, bioenergetics, encounter, confluent education, and therapy. What I found was a collection of different theories and processes aimed at increasing self awareness and sense of community as well as some strange people, many of whom seemed cought up in a "true believer" kind of consciousness that frightened me. It reminded me of the behviors surrounding the religeous revivals my preacher parents carried me to as a young child. I was frightened as a child and I still am by the "tunnel vision" and control tactics of such people. So when I encountered them at Esalen and elsewhere I turned away from them.

Later I returned to NTL for several additional contacts and discovered what appeared to be a different philosophical base than existed in 1949 but still with the essential Lewinian assumptions underlying the work. I was, in these later experiences, somewhat taken aback at the weakness and ineffectiveness of some of the leadership and trainer personnel. The holding of credentials did not seem to be any guarantee of quality nor skill in performance.

In 1970 we began the first workshop that was later to become the "Self Awareness and Interpersonal Communication" program. (SAIC) From the first we worked on the whole person concept. Our theme has always been that the workshop experience itself was not enough. That experience must be examined, tested against the logic of our philosophies and empirical information, and then refined and refined as we seek to apply it in the community from which we come. From the first, we seemed to be hitting a vital touchstone in personal growth and development. Effects on participants appeared to be useful, personally valuable to the participants, and they persisted after extended periods.

Now, in our 13th year, with a program much more orderly and sophisticated,with more staff members who not only have credentials but have proved in action what they can do, and with continued belief in the importance of a balance between affect and cognition, we are growing and still becoming.

We are, at this stage, providing a context where people may look at themselves in the process of being part of a community , where they are confronted with some of the rationale about process, person, and community that has developed over the years, and where they are encouraged to make a thoughtful analysis of their experience as the experience it and long afterward.

Throughout all of this example there is a basic theme that I want to emphasize: there are many alternatives that are available to us if we will look for them. What may have been a right choice 20 years ago may not now apply...and the search for alternatives for growth and development is never ending.

## THE CRITIQUE POPULARE

The critic is a bastion of our culture. Without this personage the evils and disorders of our society might never become known and the society would falter and suffocate in its own disorganized offal. It is the critic who "points with fear..." who "harkins with horror" to the evils, excesses, irrationalities, inconsistencies, faulty assumptions, malicious lies, and other assorted ills in our society. The muckraker-hero has been a popular figure in our society even before Lincoln Steffans.

But many of our current critics are not of the same stuff as Steffans et. al. There are many self chosen critics today seeking to achieve their heroic stature by attacking as dangerous and evil, not the current social disorders but the attempts to understand and apply the increasing knowledge of self, group, and process. Perceiving themselves almost as "Davids," they attack the "Giants" of a "crazy, misguided social revolution." They bask in their new won popularity among those who are unable to sift out the solid from the shifting. They are idolized by many who fear new movements and creative attempts to find better alternatives to life that is now being threatened with nuclear destruction. Space in technical and popular journals is practically guaranteed to a writer who wants to attack some program,person, or persons that has achieved some success, prominance or popularity with innovations in the establishment. Ah, how we love to see and hear the attacker weild the literary fist, ax or rapier amid cries of "Hit 'em agin!" or "That'll teach the so-and-so!"

If all critics were careful and thorough in their analysis, objective in their appraisal, and tentative in their conclusions their value would be much greater....but they wouldn't sell as many books, get so many articles published, have so many additions to their vita. What we really need from our critic-heros is less "horror" and more understanding. We face a brutal world and society is in constant crisis. All of us seek alternatives to the ways which are now proving useless and destructive of humanity. We need clearer analysis of the alternatives we invent or discover. And we do need to direct our efforts toward the transformation of a social condition unable to cope with a strange technological world.

Even so, we cannot avoid nor ignore the allegations and attributions of some of our "heros" for they do find aspects of disfunction and disorder that, carefully studied, can be helpful in adjusting newer themes and processes to reach goals more

effectively.

Criticisms of groups, interpersonal communication, self development, self awareness, encounter, sensitivity, group dynamics, etc. have ranged from clearly reasoned to quite emotional outbursts.

Let's take a look at a few.

"No Substance"

Back in 1950 Robert Gunderson took issue with group dynamics. /13 He referred to the work of Lewin as a "movement" and its interdisciplinary participants as delighting in defying traditional academic boundaries. He referred to role playing as absurd mockery and artificial, to feedback as inelegant and meaningless, and charged that group dynamics had no terminology which could sustain it as a substantive discipline allowing for scientific measurement. In spite of such criticism group dynamics as a field of scientific and practical study is now included in practically every college and university in the land and in foreign institutions.

The encounter movement has come in for a lot of attack. Some of it justified, I'm sure, but much of it based on limited contact and understanding of some of the foundational principles and concepts. The usual approach is to attack the fringe foolishness as representative of the fundamental themes and then dismiss the whole effort because of the weaknesses of the fringe.

"Pseudo Therapy"

13/ Gunderson, 1950. p. 34ff.

Maliver attacked encounter as being a pseudo therapy, a kind of psychological karate and tyranny, with no restraints on sexual activity, with inadequate leadership of unqualified persons, with a record of 10% emotional damage, as a kind of antirationalism, and a bastardization of humanistic principles. /14 The facts on which he based a lot of his attack were not too solid. ( For example the 10% damage factor has been disputed and checked thoroughly and there is simply no agreement on the damage factor. The difficulty of determining the actual damaging effect of the experience on a person still persists.) In some areas,however, he was hitting on reasonable issues, such as the problems of preparation and training of many who led encounter groups.

"Root Doctors"

Andrew Malcolm attacked what he considered the tyranny of a group. His theme was that emphasis on groups and group processes were designed to control behavior and ended up by bringing about suspension of rational thought. He focused his attack on the so-called Human Potential Movement as rejecting learning, demanding conformity, espousing unrestrained experience of feeling. He charges the movement as a behavior control movement akin to brain washing, religious revivalism and other such devices. In his attack he claims that there are five basic requirements the proponents advocate: isolation from the real world, suppression of past statuses, denial of the moral worth of the old self, active participation, and the institution must present negative sanctions. ( This sounds like a set of descriptions of the conditions of most institutions of higher education in this country. ) Malcolm puts it this way, "Today the minds of the people are being treated by a new breed of root doctor in a manner that closely resembles the style of the 19th century entrepeneurs." /15

14/ Maliver, Bruce L. 1973.
15/ Malcolm, 1975. p. 173.

We can't dismiss Malcolm with a sneer because he certainly put his finger on some of the "lunatic fringe" programs carrying a "human potential" or related identification. It is difficult, however, to recognize anything in his attack that deals with the central principles of the processes as espoused by the more stable practitioners and research personnel. Nor does he deal with the underlying problem that the so-called movement attempts to address, namely,the need for discovering and encouraging the development of the actual intellectual and physical possibilities inherent in each person and group.

"Awareness Seduction"

Shur attacked what he called "The Awareness Trap." /16 His theme was that the concern with personal growth and becoming aware is a seduction that is harmful and distorted and that the claims for its value are based on serious misconceptions of society. His concern is that people cannot act and interact within a social and moral vacuum and that such is the intent and effect of all the efforts at developing self awareness. He deplores the alleged invitation to self absorption as not aiding in dealing with the conditions of institutionalized oppression that surround us. The reconstruction of social institutions is the main concern of Schur. He claims that the thrust to self awareness is based on the delusive belief that "...individual growth will automatically produce major social change." /17

A particularly important charge in relation to communication is mounted, "...What you're communicating about is not too important. Nor does it matter much what kind of person you or your partner proves to be. Instead the key question becomes--are you a good communicator?...this approach carries with it a dangerous

16/ Schur, 1976
17/ Schur, 1976, p. 5.

invitation to adopt a manipulative interpersonal ethic." /18 He believes that concern for self-help leads to self preocupation instead of social change and that there cannot be a self awareness without social awareness.

Schur's dichotomising of the effect of awareness is neither accurate nor functional. While his recognition of the problems of the larger society does not seem absurd , he seems to assume that a society is not made up of individual people. But individuals' behavior effects the whole society. He fails to examine the implications of a society of people who understood themselves and were thus able to reach out to others with a greater sense of their true needs and of the nature of the others. Since before Aristotle we have recognized that there is a significant relationship between my knowledge of you and my knowledge of myself. Nor has he confronted the fact that what many people claim is self-knowledge in the various encounter-therapy situations may not be that at all!

Schur's attack on communication is of importance to us. It suggests that we must assume responsibility for teaching ethics along with teaching the skills of communication. Whose ethics? Mine? Yours? His? Are they the same? I doubt it. So, who is to decide whose ethics we are going to teach?

"Cult of Intimacy"

Malcolm Parks argues that the concern with interpersonal communication, sensitivity, etc. exhibits an "ideology of intimacy." /19 His attack focuses on such matters as self disclosure,empathy, openness, confrontation. These elements, he contends, are not clearly defined, do not confer alleged benefits, disclosure is wrongly equated

18/ Schur, 1976. p. 25.
19/ Parks, Malcolm, 1982, p. 79.

with development, and their goals are rarely based on firm theory and research. He argues that many of the writers in interpersonal communication see it as divorced from larger social structures and expectations. He argues that the ideology of intimacy decreases personal contact with people outside the self and therefore the vitality and strength of the larger social institutions will be destroyed. He insists that this ideology ( so called) has encouraged interpersonal communication scholars to ignore or devalue the importance of information contral which depends on privacy, secrecy and deception and also to ignore the prevalence of less intimate relationships which facilitate the diffusion of innovations, offer opportunities for social comparison, and promote large scale scocial cohesion and action.

He says, "...the ideology makes promises it cannot keep. It promises a world in which all hearts are known and all wounds are healed. It delivers us into a world where hearts are unknowable and wounds never heal. It promises a genuine community. It delivers a social fabric so loosely woven that large scale cohesion and action become impossible. " /20

I think that Parks has overlooked an important assumption that underlies all interpersonal communication work, namely that it is the development of relationships that is important in working through the social dilemmas. The processes or skills of openness, disclosure, and the like do not, in and of themselves, solve the basic problems. They are only tools in the development of the larger social interaction necessary for social change and development. Again, Parks gets caught up in the "Critic's Disease" of attributing to all what some may espouse, and of assuming that unspoken assumptions are simply contrary to what they may actually be. For example, I have found no statement that will "devalue public behavior in general and role behavior in particular" in the works of our scholars in interpersonal communication.

20/ Parks 1982, p. 101.

Further, Parks bemoans the lack of clear conceptual definitions in his "ideology of intimacy" and yet he attacks many concepts as if they were perfectly clear to everyone and had persistent agreed upon referents. He further makes light of failures of processes to achieve results that were never conceived as being essential to those results. For example he says that "The weight of evidence suggests that empathy does not necessarily confer therapeutic benefits. " ( p. 87.) So far as I can discover the concept of empathy is not aimed at the "therapeutic." My sources suggest that it is a state of being that allows us to have some idea of another person's state of being. Sometimes that can be of benefit to both, sometimes to neither, and sometimes to one or the other. He shows no understanding, for example, of the necessity of the therapist to be able to understand the client. If empathy would provide assistance in that understanding would it not then provide the therapist with an additional source from which to guide the development of therapeutic alternatives? That doesn't make empathy the cause of "therapeutic benefit!" The logical fault is clear.

Most important as well as frightening to the communication field is Park's apparent espousal of weak interpersonal ties, privacy, secrecy, deception, and information control as methods of developing intimate relationships, personal identity, group cohesion, authority and power, and social action. He, himself seems unclear about his espousal. On the one hand he appears to espouse it and on the other hand he argues for "...a balanced view which acknowledges the contributions of privacy, secrecy, and deception." ( p. 90) I haven't yet found any scholar in interpersonal communication who is willing to reject the essential rhetorical nature of human discourse and the conditions surrounding this. Is Parks creating a straw man? If so, he is in danger of being attacked by another form of the critics disease, called "fighting favorite fantasies."

"True Believers"

Dinges and Weigel in reviewing some of the criticisms of the "group movement" claim that these attacks have ranged from clearly reasoned to extreme emotional outbursts. Some of the concerns identified by the "critics" are the anti-intellectual flavor, potential for subjugation of individuals to group pressures, dependency inducing quality of groups, the group experience as an end in itself, substitution of structured or planned unstructured group experiences for emotionally gratifying interpersonal relations apart from the group, irrelevance of the methods to everyday living, the breeding of narcissism and emotional elitism, anti-therapeutic effects. /21

At the same time, Dinges and Weigel recognize that it is naive to claim that the group movement in general can lead to eliminating a diversity of social problems or changing the total weave of our society. Where there is danger, they point out, is the tendency to "true believerism" which is attached to many of the group programs. To this point I think we all need to take heed.

"Some Yes...Some No"

Jane Howard talks about a whole list of things critics have claimed about groups. Among them are such things as non lasting effects, ridiculous jargon, pointlessness, invasion of privacy, anti-intellectualism, cheapens real emotion, phony, emotional elitism, cultish, hypnotic to members, run by charlatans, fosters sexual promiscuity, encourages physical violence, does psychological damage, encourages use of drugs, and can be fatal. /22 The realistic point to recognize is that all of these alleged problems are true to SOME extent and in some cases. Again,

21/ Dinges, N.G. and R.G. Weigel, 1971.
22/ Howard, Jane, 1970.

to generalize about a total movement or theory, or practice from a few instances is a dangerous, if profitable, enterprise. The point has never been confirmed that these things are truly characteristice of the best programs available or of the great bulk of the programs.

"Person vs Group: Power and 'Love-Trust'"

Martin Lakin, in his closing statement for a significant volume on group research points to the continuing struggle between the person and the group emphasis as one of the real conflicts in our work. He calls for a better balance between person-centered goals and learning about process of group problem solving. /23 And he calls for more emphasis on "real life" issues.

In his introduction to the same volume Lakin acknowledges that the study and work in groups has had great influence on ideas of change in therapy, in learning, and in organizational study and development. At the same time, he points out, some forms of the T-group may have become camoflage for timeless power moves, spawned "gimmicky" or "cosmetic " behavior changes, and in many cases counterfeited real learning. Earlier models of the T-group, he suggests, with their problem-solving approach and emphasis on skill seemed more appropriate to real organization problems. The "love-trust" model which emerged in the late 60s and early 70s seemed ill suited for real world interactions. The underlying dilemma has become centered on the issue of articulating humanistic values of the small group tradition with the real complexities of contemporary life.

23/ Lakin, 1979,p. 424.

J.B. Klee reminds us that "... the encounter group grew out of the need for working things through on a more intimate level...as a means to break through personal and social obstacles that needlessly block interpersonal 'progress.'" /24 He feels that the critics' fear of encounter as a means for allowing feeling expression for people not ready to do this is exaggerated. As a comparison he points to the catastrophies, broken homes, insults, psychotic breaks, torn social and interpersonal relations , etc. that have emerged from a needlesslsy trumped ace in a bridge game. His fear is that the encounter groups may become ends in themselves, may become part of an alienation process, and may encourage narcissistic and pseudo-hygienic behavior.

"Crazy Leaders"

Weigel (1977) claims that the encounter, marathon or "group epidemic" began to decline around 1970. It was replaced with such things as primal therapy, bioenergetics, trnspersonal psychology, etc. He attributes some of the decline to the sensationalism, exploitation, and extremism of leaders. He says, "Should the encounter group movement die because of leaders' excesses, it could be an example of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. It would be a tragedy if significant positive effects of groups were lost because of overraction alone." /25

Weigel contends that the evidence clearly shows that significant changes do occur based on encounter group experiences "...when the right person is in the right kind of group run by the right leader using the right techniques. /26 He is concerned that we expect more from the encounter group experience than is realistic and suggests that we consider it as one of the many techniques available to us. We

24/ J.B. Klee, 1975-76, p. 62.
25/ Weigel, 1977, p. 217.
26/ Weigel, 1977, p. 219.

need, he insists, to avoid the "true believerism" image which too often characterizes much in the American tradition.

Jack Gibb, a foremost group dynamics specialist, said,

> "...sensitivity training does produce significant change in people when it is conducted under optimal conditions...it has become highly controversial. The increased virulence of attacks by right wing groups is some measure of the method's societal influence. responsible efferts have shown no evidence of appreciable negative effects of the training...it provides a provocative and interdisciplinary arena for necessary cross-fertilizatin among academic fields, and between scholars and practitioners...the group qua group can be a powerful setting for growth...effect of training is more enduring when integrated into long range programs...most sensitivity training as now practiced is too short in duration to be of optimal enduring effects...the conditions under which feedback...occurs is one of the most critical variables...the professional competence of the...staffing...is increasing." /27

"Narcissism Rampant"

Lasch attacks the human potential movement, the T-group, sensitivity groups, and the whole self awareness concept as encouraging and reflecting the narcissistic emphasis of our current culture. The emphases of our current culture he identifies as

> "...dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by other combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings...psuedo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous self deprecatory humor...intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women." /28

Lasch's concern and charge is that the self awareness projects, etc. do not

27/ Gibb, 1970, p. 6 ff.
28/ Lasch, 1978, p. 33

provide us with a basis for change in the already narcissistic culture but tends to enhance and continue the essential faults of that culture.

What Lasch fails to do with his own information is recognize that if the culture itself is narcissistic the institutions and conditions it espouses will be similar and that the self-awareness projects have the real potential of helping poeple get into contact with that very narcissism that they posessed long before they ever went to an encouter-sensitivity-T-group. There seems to be a serious gap in the information about narcissism. That gap represents the function of self understanding in combatting the narcissistic tendency. Nothing is said of this.

"Self vs Selfishness: What Are The Rules?"

Daniel Yankelovich makes a plea for a set of "new rules" for the future society. He argues that self-denial must be a part of our intrapersonal process and that the emphasis on self-awareness leads to faulty thinking about the self. And that faulty thinking about the self has led to faulty thinking abaout society which, in turn, keeps us from developing a sound social ethic. He attacks the idea of "authentic feelings" as allowing for selfishness and hedonistic overemphasis. He claims that the concern with the "duty to self" and the ethic it implies is based on a core idea that is a moral and social absurdity, and that it does nothing to synchronize the individual goals with the goals of society. /29

While the rebellion against the self denial ethic of protestantism and related movements in the early periods of American life is real and important, Yankelovich claims that to replace it with an ethic of self-fulfillment is an error.

29/ Yankelovich 1981

On the other hand, Yankelovich argues for an ethic of commitment which forms closer and deeper relationships. He claims that his surveys show that there is a hunger for deep personal relationships. These deep personal relationships, he argues, are not attainable by the self-fulfillment ethic. The yearnings are for something deeper than self-absorption. He claims that we reach the important expressive and sacred domains only through a web of shared meanings that transcend the self. To move forward he contends we must form commitments that advance society's well being in addition to our own personal one. He claims that this is what is needed to deal with the

> "...rot in our institutions and infrastructure--the inability of our schools to teach; slovenliness in standards of efficiency and precision; the decay of our railroads, bridges, harbors and roads; the aging of our industrial plant; the litigiousness of an overlawyered society; the decline of our political parties; the bland arrogance of the news media; the living-in-the-past of our labor unions; the irrelevence of our colleges; the short-term myopia of our industrial leaders; and the seeming inability of government to do anything efficiently and well. " /30

"Whence Alternatives"

Certainly the ultimate direction and purpose for our work in interpersonal communication, self awareness, personal growth, other awareness, etc. is an attack on all the evils Yankelovich describes as well as others. Our basic reason for being appears to exist on the principle that to develop the ultimate culture ( whatever that may be) we need to expore the methods and principles whereby each person may establish CONTACT or ENGAGE with others to whatever degree and method they CHOOSE to use. It stands clearly, it seems to me, that unless we know and understand alternative behaviors we cannot make a CHOICE.

30/ Yankelovich 1981 p. 261.

We have made a commitment to the development of alternatives in the realm of interpersonal communication. And, as the data from our studies accumulate we adjust our design and system to fit what seems functional. I have yet to discover an educational and learning system that can ignore the individual or self as a basic cultural unit and be of any use at all. Who does the learning? Who makes the choices of behavior in the society? A faceless mass or each individual person confronting his/her own image, needs, desires, and condition? The question is rhetorical....it has its own answer!

I went out to vote the other day for candidates, issues, causes, etc. The kind of things that went through my mind as I pondered my alternatives were all related to the effect of the candidates on the things to which I hold committment: my security and welfare, the security and welfare of those around me,( who would in turn effect my security and welfare if they were not secure and happy) and the larger welfare of the society to which I am a part and which if it isn't right will hurt ME.

Okay....call this a "me" generation, call me selfish, call me narrow....Then show me any movement, any religion, any policy espoused by human beings that is not perceived by at least those advocating and supporting them as being beneficial to them either immediately or ultimately. I fear that if we allow ourselves to be led into believing that we ourselves do not matter, have no value, are not of worth, have no alternatives we can choose for ourselves, that we become nothing but tools in a truly Orwellian society. I am concerned about others.....of course...because their welfare effects mine. Perhaps the ultimate value comes close to the ultimate good for each individual. If it doesn't, who will you cast out?

## HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

Scientists are observers. They see things happening and then build their hypotheses and theory. Sometimes what they see happening defies their understanding and methodology to explain it. Such is the case with us...the observation of communicative behaviors and their consequences is of critical importance. But our eyes are multifocal, our tools primitive, and our designs decadent. Even so, we keep looking...and that's where hope lies. From the cacophony of apparent contradictions may sometimes come some observable consistencies that will lead us to understand the actual transformation taking place.

There is insufficient space to review all of the observations and research in fields related to our theme. There are contradictions aplenty. Some propositions are proved and disproved, the same or similar hypotheses are accepted and rejected. As we look at the research no pattern of methodology emerges. Vast differences exist in the approach to the investigations. There are weak methods at both the positive and negative ends of any set of propositions. The search for well tested hypotheses that consistently stand the test is an almost fruitless search because of the incoherently organized and unfocused efforts.

Too much of the research is uncoordinated spazmodic projects done in the heat of trying to meet the requirements for an academic hunting license where the thorough and systematic attack is avoided in the interests of time and completing the requirements for a degree and of getting something in print. Even sc, it may be useful here to summarize some of the research in areas of concern to our theme without assuming anything more than what is seen.

The Leader-Trainer

It is beginning to become clear that the person or persons assuming the leader-trainer role in these processes carries the prime load of responsibility for creating the climate from which the outcomes may emerge. Too little has actually been done in assessing the actual significance of these roles as such. Lieberman, et. al. make the point that "...the leader has vast importance in the group, not only because of the surplus meaning which is placed upon him by the group members, but also because of his unique position in the group to harness, for better or for worse, powerful group forces." /31 The leader of the most successful group in their study took personal responsibility for what took place in the group, worked to encourage supporting, trusting norms, and facilitated individual decision-making about participation in the group. Their study included highly "qualified" professional leaders but the results showed vast difference in the effect of these leaders on the outcomes of the experience. The Lieberman group contend that the significant factor is the understanding of the leader-trainer of the theory and technology of change and learning. They report,

> "...success...is not guaranteed merely by the appropriate degrees or the ordinary clinical skills thought by some to be so critical in leading encounter groups. The argument here is that more fundamental than the degree of professionalization are the ill-founded assumptions about what operations make for positive change in human beings." /32

Leader-trainers are subject to powerful seductive influences by a group that can easily pull them away from their purpose and process. Seldman et. al. found that persons with high dependency needs are likely to provide the leader-trainer with high positive feedback and thus if the leader relies on these judgments as criteria a

31/ Lieberman, et. al. 1973. p. 437.
32/ Lieberman, 1973, p. 450.

false image of effectiveness will emerge. /33

Lundgren points out that trainers play distinctive roles in a T-group that makes them different from the members and, while these differences may diminish as the group grows older the trainer exerts an great influence over the development of the group,and establishing the climate for openness and support among members. /34

Along with the experience of a leader and the assumptions underlying the role perception the presence of a "contract" between leaders and participants appears to increase the effectiveness of the experience. /35

Some concern has been expressed over the trainer emphasis on process or individual growth and there are conflicting results. Part of the problem is in the fundamental assumptions underlying the studies themselves about the effect of process understanding and skill on personal growth. The definitions of personal growth that do not include understanding and skill in dealing with group process will, of course, reject process awareness and skill as evidence of positive results. Those definitions of process awareness and skill that do not include personal growth,likewise, will reject personal growth as evidence of positive results. The controversy is essentially around what are the ligitimate goals of the experience. In our work at SAIC we begin with the assumption that understanding of process, skill in dealing with process, and personal growth and development are ALL part of the goals of the experience. We work from the premise that the process awareness, etc. must precede the personal growth emphasis because of the necessity of being able to understand and cope with the group as a force in personal growwth. The function of the leader-trainer in the group,therefore, changes over the history of the group in accordance with the status of its members. In our training-of-trainers program we

33/ Seldmen, et. al. 1974.
34/ Lundgren, D.C., 1979, p. 330 ff.
35/Magyar, et. al. 1977, p. 381 ff.

include emphasis on both process and personal growth as areas demanding attention and trainer skill. We have found, for example, that candidates coming to us from counseling training programs are more likely to have personal growth goals dominating and therefore our initial thrust with them is to focus their attention on process matters.

This design is consistent, we think, with the kind of data that O'Day developed on individual training styles. Using a training style score system by observers of trainers in the group he found that groups demonstrated significant positive change in personal growth dimensions who were led by persons who directed more attention to the quality of the member's performance in the group, to the dependency aspects of member relationships, and expressed concerning for feelings as opposed to process. /36 The concern for personal growth dimensions, we think, comes in the later phases of the group if there is to be longer term effect.

It is clear that there are vast differences in theory, skill, and practice among trainer-leaders of interpersonal communication - group process contexts. This very difference makes it almost impossible to determine the effects of any system of training without taking into account the general assumptions and specific behavior of the trainer-leader directly involved with the group as well as the personal and social status of the members of the particular group.

Conditions Effecting Results of Group Participation: The Participants.

What is the status of the participant before experiencing the interpersonal communication training through encounter, T-Group or other forms of personal growth

36/ O'Day, 1976 p. 147ff.

and development training? This area of investigation is of great importance in understanding any effects that group training may have on individuals. The usual pre and post testing procedures do not usually account for the contextual and situational influences on the individual nor the potentiality of the person for positive change in whatever direction desired.

Likewise, are there conditions that exist within groups that make some more potentially effective than others? These are areas we need to explore in greater depth than is available in present studies.

Clearly there are personal characteristics which promote and others which block he development of positive growth and change in training groups. Mitchell found that persons who changed most from a sensitivity training group experience had high degrees of perseverance, reliability, need to be successful, vigor in small groups, original thinking, and to a lesser degree dominance and endurance. The characteristics which seemed to hinder positive change were need to help others, need to have help and understanding from others, and to a lesser degree need to be independent of others, unconcerned with what others think and cautiousness. /37 Mitchell also found that work-oriented people appear to learn more as a result of their participiation in sensistivity training groups than people who are person-oriented. Both responsibility and original thinking also seem to be positively related to the appearance of change as a result of the sensitivity group experience.

Poland and Jones found that persons who identify themselves as action oriented are more likely to be perceived as benefiting most from a four day off-campus laboratory stressing personal growth. Task oriented people were perceived as benefiting less. /38

37/ Mitchell, R.R., 1975. p. 414 ff.
38/ Poland, W.D. and J.E. Jones 1973 p. 496 ff

The Group and Persons

Stava and Bendar studied the effects of group composition on the outcomes of the groups. Three compositional forms were used: random selected groups assumed to represent a social microcosm of society; dissonance groups composed of persons involved in conflict ; and cohesive groups where members were placed in groups where members were most attractive to them. Outcomes measured were self concept and social desirability.They found no clear support for one theory of group composition over the other. /39

A minimum of structure seems more productive of creative production in groups than does either democratic or authoritarian structures. Glover and Chambers found that "...creative production ( as measured by the Torrance Thinking Creatively With Words test) ...can best be facilitated by providing a minimum of structure...authoritarian structure seems to be a factor that impedes the group production of creative responses..." /40

The way that persons view the experiential group experience before and during their participation has a great deal to do with the effects on their behavior as a result of the experience. Huici found that participants see the experiential groups as a kind of "privileged social space" which allows ways of interacting that are not usually available in ordinary "back home" conditions. Their constructs in referring to other members of their groups are quite different from those used in the groups making up their "real life groups. " /41 Huici found that these internal constructs leading to a differential treatment of members of the experiential group increase significantly immediately from the beginning of the group. These constructs were found to be congruent with the group culture of the experience and non congruent with the outside experience.

39/ Stava and Bednar, 1979, 200-213.
40/ Glover and Chambers, 1978. p. 387 ff.
41/ Huici, C., 1980 p. 297-307.

The initial condition of social sensitivity, also, has an effect on the amount of acceptance and participiation of group members. Carlson et. al. found that in a population of 183 male VA psychiatric patients highly socially sensitive men were more accepted by the other group members and participated at a higher rate. /42

Sources of influence within the sensitivity training laboratory ( which included T-groups and theory-cognitive sessions, as well as other activities under a design similar to one used at NTL and also SAIC) were studied in a lab program in Southampton,England in 1974. All subjects were professionals in the helping professions. The results were reported as follows:

> "...no single source of influence can account for the changes which occur within the sensitivity training laboratory...the average participant identified nine sources of influence...some of these sources were more salient than other, but there was no uniform heirarchy of influence... In some groups the trainer was highly salient while in others he was not...members and trainers both exerted some influence...one of the reasons for the powerful impact which sensitivity training sometimes achieves is precisely that the participant does have a choice of influence sources. This makes possible the emergence of internalization-based influence, rather than the greater incidence of compliance which there would be if the choice of sources were more restricted... the benefits of conducting laboratories rather than single separate groups is that they provide some alternative avenues for the compliant member to work on his concerns...there is little reason to view compliant members as "casualties" of the sensitivity...laboratory. " /43

Smith's observations are highly consistent with the current thinking in the SAIC program. We seek to provide, in the context of the total laboratory a variety of alternatives for personal growth and development that allow the participant to select those kinds of experience that provide opportunities for the maximum growth. In the larger context of education this strategy seems to be more fundamentally sound than a

42/ Carlson et. al. 1981, p. 183 ff.
43/ Smith, P.B., 1976, p. 331 ff.

single approach.

Our theme in this section is that the intent of the participant before coming to the experiential session plays a heavy role in determining just what that person is going to accomplish as a result of the experience. That means that there must be as clear an understanding as possible pre-meeting as to the possible outcomes and alternatives. It is my feeling that too many of the programs are one-shot affairs with single system approaches and the preliminary information is at best sketchy and incomplete. When research on outcomes and effects are centered in these forms of groups the results are simply going to be quite different from those groups where the participants had greater choice and freedom to select experiences from the outset.

Instrumented Training

Another factor that is attracting more attention ,as the pressure of numbers of students and limited faculty resources increases in the universities, is the use of so-called instrumented training in the place of trainer-led groups. Blake and Mouton /44 developed a session of the Southwestern Human Relations Training Laboratory by using inventories and other instruments instead of group trainers. The method has been used widely with varying results. Wood and Goldberg reported that instrumented training groups rated higher in sentiment, interacted at a higher level and had an activity level equal to or higher than teacher-critic and T-Group conditions./45 In recent years SAIC has used an increasing number of instruments stimulated by their availability through University Associates. The values have not yet been assessed on a specific basis. However, on a general impact it appears that the use of

44/ Blake and Mouton 1970
45/ Wood, R.V. and A.A. Goldberg, 1968.

instruments in experiential groups have values in the way of focusing attention of the participants on critical matters and issues that the lab leaders or coordinators feel are important.

## Effects of Experiential Groups

Numerous effects have been studied. Some of the studies have used controls and others have used internal pre and post change models. As many reviewers have pointed out one of the weaknesses of most of the studies is that the results are drawn from participant generated data in the form of tests, inventories, questionnaires, journals, and interviews. The reliability of these devices for determining either positive or negative effects is still being debated. There are so many variables effecting these and other measurement devices in human behavior that we are still dealing with very high probability issues. Even so, it may be germain to consider the presentation of such evidence as establishing a presumption in favor of the conclusions if the application of the techniques are as carefully done as possible.

One of the areas receiving a great deal of interest is the area of change in relationships. Smith found that the easiest changes to make after a group experience may be those concerning withdrawal or reduction of intensity in a relationship because such changes can be achieved unilaterally./46 In commenting on the state of current data about the effect on change, Smith said, " A good deal of evidence now exists that sensitivity training is able to generate durable change among a substantial proportion of trainees. The more recent of the evaluation studies upon which such conclusions rest have quite frequently included control groups, random assignment of trainess and controls, repeated measure, and an adequate duration of

46/ Peter B. Smith, 1979, p. 414-430.

training."/47

Individualized behavior change was given attention by Uhelmann and Weigel (1977). Controls were used. The experimental group members, in a pre experience interview and mailed behavior goal assessment set personal goals to be achieved by the experience. After the group experience a second interview was held by a trained interviewer. The group treatment was found to be "...effective in producing significant positive changes toward individualized behavior change goals, with both ...participants and their independent judges observing such changes in participants' lives following the treatment. /48 The authors recognized that the goal-setting process alone can lead to observable short term changes toward the goals but that the actual amount of change generated by the interview was small compared with that produced by the group experience.

Bebout (1971) worked with 1000 volunteers from the university and community populations in Berkeley led by non professional leaders who were slected and trained as part of the program. Tests were administered before, during and twice following the program. Significant positive change was indicated in self satisfaction, inner direction, self reliance, comfort with sexuality, reduction of inhibition, increase in spontaneity and in self actualization. The study ran for a period of four years. Especially noted was that the groupos did little toward raising productivity, or solving work or school problems. Also, it was noted that the more experienced and older individuals received diminishing returns from the group experience; humanistically inclined persons did not change much in this orientation except to

47/ P. Smith,1979, p. 415.
48/ Uhelmann, M.R. and R.G. Weigel, 1977, p. 277.

become more so. Friends of the participants reported greater empathy in their relationships and a reduction in shallowness in benevolent behavior. /49

Bebout suggests that the co-experiencing of emotional phenomena plays a major role in personal growth. The "Experiential Community" that is created by the "more or less conscious and simultaneous occurrence of functionally equavalent emotional experience in two or more individuals" may account for many of the positive effects of such groups. He says, "If the underlying premise of human potential groups is 'man as socius', then man's ability to share an emotional life-space is part of the essence of being human and being social." /50 This concept and the observation of the phenomena in such a large sampling carries a great deal of significance to our ideas stated above about the conditions within experiential groups that actually effect the outcomes. Another factor in this program was that the leader-training did not emphasize group process and decision making. The major emphasis was on personal growth.

Some of the research has laid a question about the effects of experiential groups on work performance. In an isolated situation where one individual goes from the group to another context with another group this seems to be the case. But when the group itself is also the post group context something else may appear. Magen conducted a study of a national soccer team of Israel which, after several years of success began losing games at the beginning of a new season in spite of having some of the best players in the country. A trained psychologist met with them in an experiential group setting and facilitated their concentration on positive aspects of better performance. The activities involved many of the activities of an

49/ Bebout 1971 p. 91 ff.
50/ Bebout 1971 p. 104

experiential group process. The group won the next game against the first placed team in the country and the next few games. /51

Other kinds of effects of participation have been noted. Barrett-Lennart et. al. found what they considered an enduring change in level of self-regard for most of the participants if a two week workshop of mental health professionals. /52 Being .ith others in an intimate fashion was an important outcome found by Steinhauer. /53 Positive changes in self concept and interpersonal communication were found when compared with a control group. /54 Six months after the experience 3/4 of the participants in a residential encounter group series indicated significant gains in personal functioning, confidence, effectiveness in interpersonal helping situations, and continued growth of their concepts of self and others. About 1/2 indicated substantial increases in openness and sensitivity to others. /55 Improvement of teacher-student relations in general classrooms was discovered as a result of an experiential group held outside of the regular classroom situation. /56

Beach studied the effects of 12 encounter group sessions on 32 participants after six months by having the responses analyzed by an independent judge. He found that reports showed the following changes: 78% in increased self awareness, 34% in sensitivity to others, 31% in greater openness and risk taking, 31% with a greater sense of freedom and liberation, 28% greater self acceptance, 28% improved ability to relate to others, and 9% increased ability to trust others. /57

Smith and Miller found that by matching of the cultural backgrounds of members

51/ Magen 1980 p. 339-344.
52/ Barrett-Lennart, et. al., 1973-74, p. 35-41.
53/ Steinhauer, 1973-74,p. 1 ff.
54/ Worthen and Malony, 1973-74, p. 243 ff.
55/Barrett-Lennard, 1974-75, p. 86 ff
56/ Cooper 1974-75, p. 71 ff.
57/ Beach, 1975-76,p. 65-67.

and the group leaders there was no difference in the effectiveness of the groups with those where there was no such matching. /58 Counselor training groups with didactic informational type presentations were compared with counselor training groups using the small group sensitivity approach. The effect that was the members of the sensitivity groups showed significantly greater achievement in accurate empathy. /59 Sensitivity group participantes showed significant changes in measures of self-actualization and over time maintained these changes although different participants made positive gains at different periods following the experience. /60 Cal Downs reviewed a number of studies and found significant differences in results of lab training between types of people on the basis of sex, age, work experience, and satisfaction. /61

King et. al. found that self acceptance was higher among participants who had experienced a marathon group session of 24 hours than it was among participants who experienced a prolonged sensitivity training of from 3 to 4 hours each week for 14 weeks./62 Self actualization was significantly increased by a T-group experience of 30 hours and the subjects maintained the increase over a period of one year. /63 Both gestalt and encounter groups appear to have more significant effect than control groups in changing self concepts. There was no significant difference between the gestalt groups and the encounter groups and no major differences between males and females. /64

Comparing traditional type college classes using a lecture method with classes using an encounter group model, King found that self-acceptance increased significantly in the encounter group and not in the traditional lecture classes. He

58/ Smith, D. and R. Miller, 1979, p. 263-270.
59/ McWhirter, J. J. 1974,
60/ Reddy, W.B., 1973, p. 407 ff.
61/ Downs, 1972
62/ King, Payne, McIntire, 1973, p. 414 ff.
63/ McIntire,W. G., 1973, p. 459 ff.
64/ Finando, Croteau, Sanz, 1977, p. 123 ff.

said that "High self-acceptance has been related to better adjustment, fewer learning difficulties, and a teaching style which encourages divergent thinking. /65

Massarik and Carlson studied the California Psychological Inventory ( CPI) and administered it to 70 people in a Business Administration sensitivity training course of 60 hours over a 15 week period. The results showed no clear cut major personality change as measured by the CPI./66 Again, the problems of the inner nature of the group experience, its time relationship, etc. were not accounted for. This study, needs to be compared to those studies comparing the extended group meeting for several hours each day over a period of 10-20 weeks with concentrated weekend or marathon sessions .

65/ King,M. 1976,p 382

66/ Massarik, F. and G. Carlson,1970, p.216 ff.

Self Disclosure: To Spill or Not to Spill

Probably no aspect of experiential training and research has come in for more controversly than the matter of self disclosure. Parks fastened on the self-disclosure process as evidence of an "ideology of intimacy" that he felt to be destructive and dangerous. /67 Others have railed against what they think is an invasion of personal private space and what is perceived as a dangerous "gut spilling" process that defeats the individual and causes rejection from others. The difficult part of an attempt to examine these is that many of the criticisms start with the assumption that self-disclosure means to tell all.

Jourard's early studies in this phenomenon certainly did not espouse that extent at all. He said, "... too much or too little self disclosure betokens disturbance in self and in interpersonal relationships, while some as yet undetermined amount under specified conditions is synonymous with mental health." (underline mine) /68 The "undetermined amount" has never been defined for general purposes nor have the specified conditions been finally determined. While Jourard's studies were seeking answers to those very questions he died before any clear cut tendencies appeared. Subsequent studies have increasingly demonstrated that these are indeed variables that shift from person to person from circumstance to circumstance.

There are always questions about whether Jourard's attempts to measure self disclosure were or were not successful. It all depends on what is expected of the information he did develop.....and the nature of the self disclosure being

67/ Parks, 1982,
68/ Jourard, 1964, p. 15.

identified. Bochner's contention that the Jourard questionnaire does not accurately predict self-disclosure does not speak to the fact of whether it measures any degree of disclosure that has happened or is happening . This latter may be much more important at this point that predicting future behavior. /69 Bochner contends that the validity of Jourard's measures were not established. Bochner, however, does not speak of subsequent efforts to identify and measure the presence of self disclosure nor does he deny that it exists. These, it seems to me, are the prerequisites to any attempt to predict its appearance in the future. Before a scientist can predict the appearance of a phenomenon in the future he must have some idea of what it looks like in the present. It is just such confusion that seems to be unnecessarily clouding the whole problem of understanding.

The confusion of the relationship of liking and knowing to self disclosure likewise seems almost intentionally confusing. It's as if liking and knowing are the criteria by which self disclosure is to be measured. "If there is no relation of self disclosure to attraction then self disclosure is of no value...." seems to be the proposition being tested? Must a behavior be a source of attraction in order to be functional? Are we clear in our logic when we argue that because self disclosure is not related to attraction it is therefore unnecessary and even dangerous?

The riskiness of self disclosure seems to be a matter of concern. "No evidence currently exists to indicate that self disclosure is less risky than interpersonal feedback or group confrontation, either practically or conceptually." /70 Post et. al. found that persons in a high anxiety state disclosed less breadth and less intimate information . /71 The sense of riskiness seems to be allied to anxiety states. Along the same lines Willage and Meyer found that "...notifying people that

69/ Bochner, 1982, p. 109-124.
70/ Goldstein, et. al. 1978, p. 579 ff.
71/ Post, Wittmaier, and Radin, 1978. p. 12-19.

the information they report might not be kept confidential resulted in their being less candid, while notifying them that the information would be kept confidential caused them to be more open and honest." /72 This connects up uncannily with the present laws of disclosure in relation to applicants seeking references for jobs where the applicant must indicate whether he/she retains or waives the right to see the statement made by the referent.

Trust and risk taking are closely allied. Wheeless and Grotz noted that a higher level of trust was associated with more consciously intended disclosure and a greater amount of disclosure. /73

Self disclosure seems to breed self disclosure. Strassberg et. al. found that self disclosing statements by members of a parent discussion group tended to be preceded and/or followed by another self disclosing statement on a frequency greater than chance. The non disclosing statements in these groups appeared to cluster together in significant frequency. The effects of instructor self disclosure on students' disclosure was studied by DeWine et. al. They found that when an instructor self discloses to a greater extent than the students in class there is a carry over effect on the students who then, in turn disclose more to their best friend outside of class. /74

A person's concept of self seems to have some relationship to the amount of disclosure exhibited in encounter groups, according to Bean and Houston. They found that,"...self-concept is related to self-disclosure in encounter groups but ...the nature of the relationship changes over time...early in group interactions low self-concept subjects disclosed less than the high self-concept subjects; further, as

72/ Willage and Meyer, 1978, p. 95.
73/ Wheeless and Grotz, 1977, 250 ff.
74/ DeWine, Bennett, and Medcalf, 1978, p. 563 ff.

low self-concept subjects became more comfortable in the group and as they were encouraged by the group, they increased in self-disclosure until they equaled, or possibly exceeded the initially high self-concept subjects." /75

Throughout the studies in self disclosure the theme of appropriateness appears again and again. The conditions of "appropriateness" seem hard to pin down because of the infinite variety of personal perceptions of what is appropriate at a given time with particular people. Even so some evidence has been gathered that adds to understanding of this problem. Thompson was interested in the effect of disclosing information about a disability between handicapped and non handicapped persons. She found that communicating about the disability makes the participants more comfortable and makes the handicapped person more preferred as a partner. Even so, she points out that the most important variable influencing the effect appeared to be its appropriatness. Norm violations were not liked by others regardless of the intimacy of the disclosure. /76 Lange and Grove found that subjects chose a moderate disclosing confederate significantly more often than a high or low discloser. /77

Twisselman and Ullman used self disclosure in a persuasive public speech to determine whether it would effect the trusting and liking perceptions of the receivers of the communication. They found that attraction for the speaker who use self disclosure was higher than for those who listened to a speaker with no disclosure and that the listeners more readily identified with the disclosing speaker than with the non disclosing speaker. /78 On the other hand Wheeless, Grotz, and Coyne, seeking to test a more public situation than that found in face to face group or dyadic situations, gave their subjects a booklet containing written materials with

75/ Bean and Houston, 1978, p. 553.
76/ Thompson, 1982, p. 196 ff.
77/ Lange and Grove, 1981, p. 355 ff.
78/ Twisselman and Ullmann, 1981,

various amounts of disclosure at a high and low level. They found that absence of self disclosure in the written material seemed to elicit greater trust than even positive self disclosure of both high and low amounts. /79

These two studies are not contradictory in their results because they were examining two vastly different forms of communication. Wheeless, et. al. simply cannot project their results into the spoken communication situation because of the well known differences in the two modes and the conditions under which it is presented and received. In other words both sets of results could be resonable in the face of the conditions being studied. Quite obviously we do not use the same standards of trust and attraction in written communication that we do in spoken communication. We need to compare the two with the same information in order to understand the difference.

In an often cited work Chaikin and Derlega exploredd the role of the reciprocity norm on self-disclosure by using actriesses on video- tape. The subjects viewed two strangers conversing. The first disclosed either intimate or nonintimate information; the second replied with either intimate or nonintimate information. The person who broke the norm ( as when she replied intimately to a non intimate disclosure, or nonintimately to an intimate disclosure) was liked less than the person who maintained the norm of reciprocity. If the normbreaker used nonintimate disclosure she was considered "cold." The normbreaker sharing intimate material was seen as "maladjusted". Intimate disclosures were also rated as unusual and inappropriate by the observers. /80

79/ Wheeless, Grotz, and Coyne, 1976.
80/ Chaikin and Derlega, 1974. p. 117-129.

The effect of self disclosure on attraction has been disputed. Parks (1982) claims that research has failed to support a relationship between disclosure and attraction. and that "High levels of disclosure often turn out to be a mixed blessing at best and a deterrent to attraction at worst." /81 But as far back as 1969 Worthy et. al. pointed out that the exchange of self disclosure ( in a laboratory setting) functioned consistent with social exchange theory. The intimacy of disclosures exchanged tended to follow the norm of reciprocity. More intimate disclosures were made to those who were initially better liked and final liking was higher for those who made more intimate disclosures. /82

Also, it seems that when there is negative self disclosure the discloser loses attractiveness to his disclosees. /83 Sote and Good found that similarity to a stranger in self-disclosing tendencies leads to greater liking for the stranger than does dissimilarity. /83 Davis found that "...responsibility for the intimacy level was generally assumed by the more disclosing partner,whereas the less disclosing partner assumed the reciprocating role." In explaining this Sote and Good suggest that a "norm of reciprocity" may apply only in the direction of increasing intimacy and therefore the more disclosing person may be more controlling of intimacy levels in either direction. /84

Touching and attraction appear to be somewhat related in our culture and are certainly factors of attraction in other cultures. Lomranz and Shapira explored the self disclosing and touching behaviors of female Israeli high school students and found them significantly positively correlated. /85

81/ Parks, 1982, p. 85.
82/ Worthy, Gary, and Kahn, 1969, p. 59-63.
83/ Gilbert and Horenstein, 1975, 316-322.
83/ Sote and Good, 1974, p. 491 ff.
84/ Davis, 1976, p. 787 ff.
85/ Lomranz and Shapira, 1974, p. 223 ff.

I think that one of the reasons self-disclosure appears so frightening to many is that it is often depicted as an end in itself. Out of context self-disclosure is certainly frightening. There are many perceived restrictions as to what, how much, and to whom one gives information about the self. And while certain levels and characteristics of disclosure may be attributed to people with good mental health in the therapeutic context, the translation of that into rules and standards of behavior for growth groups, experiential learning, and interpersonal communication is still being explored. My hunch is that we will tend to develop whatever norms will give us the best results in the situations in which we find ourselves. The understanding of the nature of self disclosure and its posssible effects should certainly prepare us more adequately for dealing with the task of determining our own levels.

Beach and Wilmot point out quite effectively that "...the intentions that underlie disclosure are a crucial element in relational development." They suggest that there are types of disclosure that are the result of an intent to be manipulative. These intents are aimed at enhancing self, enhancing the other, sharing with the other, etc. It is possible, therefore, to use pseudo-disclosure for purposes of manipulation. And they raise interesting questions. If I engage in phoney or pseudo disclosure will I then create a "false image" of myself by others and by myself? /86

THE SELF AWARENESS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

Bringing together all that we can find about interpersonal communication, self

86/ Beach and Wilmot, 1975,

awareness, personal growth and development, and experiential learning, we have developed a teaching-learning mileu that we hope will provide participants with opportunities to explore the many alternatives to their own communicative behavior. The atmosphere is one where they are protected from some of the destructive aspects of failure that would occur were they to experiment in their everyday culture. At the same time, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the design and development of strategies for dealing with their "back home" culture that will allow them to apply those understandings and skills they choose to embrace as a result of the experience and study.

That there are positive results coming from this experience is becoming clearer each year. Several studies have been done and several are still in process as part of the continuing self-study research design of the laboratory. /87

Droge found that in the context of the SAIC Workshop, individuals seemed to become more attuned to the impact of their communication on others, changed their self-perception of impression leaving and the communication styles they exhibited . /88

Another study was done with Schutz' FIRO B and F. A significant increase in expression of inclusion, affection, and control was found as a result of the workshop experience. /89

Roberts conducted a study which included SAIC as part of a larger population of

87/ See Keltner 1979
88/ Droge, 1980.
89/ Bishow and Keltner, 1977

persons taking a combination laboratory/classroom program at Oregon State University. He found significant increases in self-actualization levels while there were changes but not significant ones in the compatability among the participants of the 19 small groups in the sample. /90 The results of this study led to an immediate change in the design and training process in the subject classes and in SAIC. Greater emphasis was directed toward developing interpersonal compatability in the years since that study was completed. Results of this change are still being studied and tested. Annual in-house evaluations of the programs and the leadership are conducted at the end of the workshop and six months later. These data are examined and used for determining changes in design and personnel from year to year.

The SAIC focus is on personal growth as it relates to the individual and the development of effective community in both small and larger social units. It is our assumption that the larger social condition can only be changed as we effect the awareness and the skills of the basic social unit-the person. If we can work to enhance the potentialities of that person and at the same time develop and encourage the use of effective methods of group processes such as decision making, leadership, communication, etc. we will be implementing all the basic goals of experiential learning in a concentrated and substantive way.

Of great significance in our design and treatment at the workshop is our underlying assumption that the experience itself is simply not sufficient. Cognitive study and analysis of the experience is required of everyone. Journals, personal inventories, self analysis, study of research and didactic literature are all an inherent part of the laboratory design. A special book of readings is prepared each

90/ Roberts, 1975.

year for the participants which covers theory, projects, and research data./91

## CONCLUSION

Communication and interpersonal awareness learning is vitally alive and well. Even though there seems to be a decline in its surface popularity the underpinning of theory, philosophy, and study is unescapable. We need more careful research on the process,conditions, and outcomes. We need to evaluate goals and methods constantly. We need to persist in our efforts to meet and cope with the misinformation, unsupported charges, and negative mythology that many so-called critics make of our work.

Our image of humanity is of a society with infinite ability to grow and to recognize our wholistic being by choice rather than by fiat. Our perception of society is of a complex network of many goals, methods, and contexts but one that is subject to change and development.

We are concerned with the social growth and the development of cultural norms and processes that more adequately cope with the high and potentially destructive technologies that surround us and use them for the common good more than we now seem capable. We are of the mind that the individual is basic to the social system but that we must facilitate and train that individual to function <u>within</u> a social system rather than to retreat from it. To retreat is unthinkable. To become social and political hermits is impossible. Our goals are to increase the potential for human joy and happiness, to effect greater social productiveness, to facilitate

91/ Keltner, 1981, 1982.

compatible interdependent behaviors, to enhance the idea and experience of freedom, to assist the individual to find a place in the social context, and to guarantee greater satisfaction from being exquisitely human.

Rollo May put it well in a recent interview with Liz Campbell of AHP,

"We are interdependent with other human beings and we can achieve our own dignity only as we participate with others in community. Responsibility comes out of the fact that we are human. We are bound to all other people who ever existed; we are indebted to all these people who make up our history. This gives us responsibility for our present world and for the future. " /92

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